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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE

Downtown Delaware Hosts Special Presentation

Turning Downtown Vacancies into Community Assets

DOVER, Del. (November 20, 2008) – Downtown Delaware, a program of the Delaware Economic Development Office, hosted a free presentation on turning downtown vacancies into community assets yesterday at the University of Delaware Elbert N. and Ann V. Carvel Research and Education Center in Georgetown, Del.

More than 65 town representatives, small business and property owners, and community leaders statewide attended the presentation. The training opportunity was made available by the Delaware Economic Development Office, the USDA Rural Development, and the University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration. It was open to people actively involved in the revitalization of a Delaware community.

“Vacant and underutilized properties can undermine the vitality of Delaware's Main Streets and downtowns,” said Diane Laird, State Coordinator for Downtown Delaware. “This important training presentation will help Delaware’s community leaders realize potential opportunities to deal with this issue.”

John Kromer, a Senior Consultant at the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government, spoke about strategic planning and program development to support urban neighborhood reinvestment.

“There is no silver bullet to fixing vacancy issues because circumstances surrounding the unused buildings are so varied,” Kromer said. He recommends developing an inventory and images of available buildings and posting it on a Web site to raise the profile of the properties. Monitoring sales data, property owner information, and condition and amenities of buildings is critical, as well as promoting the assets of the downtown.

Alan Mallach also spoke about how to turn abandoned properties into community assets. He is a Senior Nonresident Fellow at the Metropolitan Policy Program of The Brookings Institution, a visiting scholar in the community affairs department of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, and a visiting lecturer in the graduate city planning program at Rutgers University.

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